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QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND STUDY OF SPECIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING: PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE RIGHT TO ENJOY AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING; FOREIGN DEBT, ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT POLICIES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE FULL ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND, IN PARTICULAR, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement submitted by the International Movement ATD Fourth World and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category I); Caritas Internationalis, the International Federation of Social Workers, the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, the International Federation Terre des Hommes, Development Innovations and Networks, the International Council of Jewish Women, the World Movement of Mothers, Pax Christi, International Catholic Peace Movement, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations and the World Federation of Methodist Women, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category II); and the International Association of Charities, the World Association for the School as an Instrument of Peace, the Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, the Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples and the World Christian Life Community, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is distributed in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[11 February 1993]

GE.93-10804 (E)

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EXTREME POVERTY

1. Poverty is a negation of human rights

In all countries, whether they are rich or poor, industrialized or developing, and irrespective of their political structures, individuals and families in extreme poverty have no access to either the economic, social and cultural rights or the civil and political rights that all are acknowledged to possess under international instruments. The gravity and urgency of their situation require everyone to make a practical commitment.

What paths can be followed today by the international community, and particularly the champions of human rights, in order to move forward?

2. "World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty" on 17 October: an opportunity to mobilize in support of human rights

By resolution 47/196 of 22 December 1992, the United Nations General Assembly decided that 17 October will be "International Day for the Eradication of Poverty". For five years, many non-governmental organizations throughout the world have observed "World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty" with the poorest; hence they welcome this opportunity to mobilize public opinion. They will continue to strive to ensure that the most neglected families occupy a central place in the marking of 17 October. They will continue to emphasize the link between extreme poverty and human rights in the spirit of the words of Father Joseph Wresinski engraved on a stone in the Parvis des Libertés et des Droits de l'Homme at the Place du Trocadéro in Paris when 17 October was first marked in 1987:

> "Where human beings are condemned to live in want, human rights are violated. It is a sacred duty to unite to secure respect for those rights."

Because of the link between human rights and extreme poverty, the events marking this day each year should be coordinated by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights.

3. The World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, June 1993): a decisive landmark in achieving human rights for all

The World Conference on Human Rights will take stock of progress made since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; consequently, it cannot ignore such an important aspect as the achievement of human rights for the poorest. Through its proceedings and the concerns it addresses the Conference must demonstrate that human rights are truly indivisible, interdependent and universal. Thus each individual is needed to help further the achievement of these rights for all, particularly persons and families that cannot exercise them.

4. The Commission on Human Rights moves forward in a new field

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights is addressing a new field of knowledge through the study on "Human rights and extreme poverty", which it has defined in its resolutions 1989/10, 1990/15, 1991/14 and 1992/11, and for which a Special Rapporteur, Mr. Leandro Despouy, has been appointed. Hitherto, the international community has grasped various facts in the fields of economics, health and culture that are related to extreme poverty. But neither the experience, thoughts and efforts, nor the aspirations of those suffering from it have every been recorded. If we understand the efforts of the poorest and draw on them we can begin to understand that they have an awareness of the paths to be followed to overcome extreme poverty and exclusion.

The study, which Father Wresinski called for as early as 1987 on behalf of the poorest, and which has always been supported by the Fourth World NGO Committee, will be based on the experience and thinking of those living in great poverty as well as those with a durable commitment to work with them. By throwing greater light on the lives of the poorest, this study will allow better understanding of how poverty prevents its victims from exercising the rights and freedoms that they enjoy in principle. It will clarify the indivisible nature of human rights and how they may be restored for everyone.

5. Making partners of the poorest

Participation by the poorest in becoming aware of their situation is a first step towards achieving their rights: to know that they are consulted and listened to means that others acknowledge their existence. But participation by individuals and families that for so long have been ignored and absent from fundamental discussions requires that the different ways and means of achieving such participation in a genuine manner must be sought and tested jointly with them. This will also call for the appropriate conditions to be defined (see in this regard the Secretary-General's paper, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1992/50). In this undertaking the international community can draw on the experience of non-governmental organizations which have long been standing together with the poorest and helping to ensure that their voice is heard.

As regards participation in the study on "Human rights and extreme poverty", within a working group, several non-governmental organizations from the Fourth World NGO Committee have initiated consultations among the poorest through the members of their organizations all over the world.

APPEAL

The non-governmental organizations listed above

1. Request that the coordination of events to mark 17 October should be entrusted to the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, in view of the link between human rights and extreme poverty;

2. Strongly express the wish that 17 October, which the United Nations General Assembly has declared to be "International Day for the Eradication of Poverty", should stimulate thoroughgoing mobilization focused on peoples suffering from extreme poverty and exclusion;

3. Express the firm hope that the World Conference on Human Rights will grant an important place in its discussions and recommendations to the achievement of human rights for the poorest;

4. Express their satisfaction at the launching of the study on "Human rights and extreme poverty" and the appointment of the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Mr. Leandro Despouy, to conduct it;

5. Express support for the approach and method defined by the Commission on Human Rights for the conduct of the study, while emphasizing the need for participation by the poorest themselves as well as those with a durable commitment to work with them;

6. Undertake to support participation by persons living in extreme poverty by all means at their disposal, and to contribute to highlighting the terms on which this participation will occur.